

1579

PLAIN
CHRISTIAN DUTIES,
RECOMMENDED;
IN
AN EXHORTATION.



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PLAIN
CHRISTIAN DUTIES,
RECOMMENDED,

IN AN EXHORTATION,
delivered at the Settlement of a Church,
Of the Baptist Denomination.

On the 22d. of March 1791,
and now published
(*by request*)

FOR THE BENEFIT OF
CHRISTIANS IN GENERAL,
AND
MEMBERS OF CHURCHES
IN PARTICULAR

BY ZENAS TRIVETT. *K*

“ Let all things be done decently, and in order.”

“ Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ.”

PAUL.



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CHRISTIAN DUTIES

BY

THE

REV. J. C. LIVINGSTON, D.D.

OF THE BOARD OF CHRISTIANITY

AND THE BOARD OF MISSIONS

AND THE BOARD OF

CHRISTIANITY

AND THE BOARD OF

CHRISTIANITY



MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF

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ADVERTISEMENT.

WHEN the dissensions of churches, and the many irregularities in the conduct of some church-members are consider'd, it is hoped the following Exhortation will not be deemed unseasonable.

On the performance of the duties which church-members owe to each other, the happiness of churches very much depends: with a view to excite in the members of churches a proper attention to these duties, is the following Exhortation presented to the christian world. The author has been much solicited to publish it; and he hopes the candid christian will accept the design, and pass over the defects. He only adds, Reader, let thy prayers unite with his, that a divine blessing may attend his feeble, but well meant endeavours.



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persons who are interested in
the subject.

77

PLAIN

CHRISTIAN DUTIES,

RECOMMENDED.

.....

My dear Brethren and Sisters !

AS you have requested me to address you on the present occasion, I hope you will suffer the word of exhortation.— You are this day become a *Church of Jesus Christ* ; formed, not by coercion and compulsion, but on the noble principles of christian liberty ; “stand fast brethren, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free.”—Your conduct to-day reproves and confutes the common vulgar idea, that a church is a building compos’d of wood and stone, in which men meet to worship God ; your practice declares that, not the *building*, but the *true worshippers* therein, properly united, are the church.—Your conduct to-day also opposes the idea of a *national church*, and you agree with the church of England, that a church of Christ is A CONGREGATION of *faithful men*, not, A NATION of *faithless infidels*.—You also renounce the

idea of a *parochial* church, having chosen the congregational form, and embodied on that plan; and which is the alone plan of the new Testament: and, indeed, that the inhabitants of a parish, as well as those of a nation, are not fit to form a church of Christ, which is a habitation for the Most High, will appear very evidently by an inspection of their character and conduct; and where is the parish that will admit of an exception? Be thankful, my brethren, that you are taught a plan of church order and government that does not lead you to hold fellowship and communion with drunkards, fornicators, liars, extortioners, unjust, and prophane persons, but you admit whom you please to your communion, and have power to reject those whom you judge unworthy.

You are this day become a church of Jesus Christ, a dwelling-place for the God of Jacob, for God hath said of Zion, "This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it," God's church is his house, but it is a *spiritual* house, built with living and *lively* stones, which are united together with the cement of love: *Ezekiel* seems to have had a vision of the gospel-church under the idea of a house, when God commanded him to "shew the house to the house of Israel, the form thereof, the comings in thereof, and the goings out thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and all the laws thereof." Now, as ye are become a house of God, there is reason to hope and expect that some who love and long for the divine presence, will seek admission amongst you; to admit new members

into a gospel-church is pleasing work, but it requires much caution, for while some come with sincere hearts, and pure intentions, with a desire to feed amongst the sheep, and to enjoy, and glorify the great Shepherd, others probably will be prompted by base motives, and sinister ends, seeking, not Gods glory, but their own honor, or interest; be not therefore too hasty my friends in the admission of members into your Society; the way of entrance into the house of God, is by faith in Christ, who is the door of that house; be well satisfied then, that the persons you admit are believers in Christ, and such who prove their faith by their works; and on the other hand be very careful that you grieve not such as are weak in faith and understanding, by rejecting them on that account, for, remember, if you have evidence that they are gracious souls, that is sufficient, for the great King of Zion never intended that his children should become men before they are admitted into his visible kingdom; the church of Christ is a sheepfold, and is intended for the protection, and benefit of his *lambs*, as well as his sheep; it is a *nursery*, into which *babes* are to be received, and where they are to be fed with the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby, from babes to men, and so to fathers in the church of God.—To see a company of such babes flocking to the house of God, and to hear them there lisp out his goodness, tell of his grace, and say, ‘Come, and let us join ourselves to the LORD in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten,’—O how delightful! —But I must leave this pleasing scene, and turn your attentions to another, which tho’ of the painful

kind, is nevertheless necessary to be attended to; permit me then to observe, that notwithstanding all your vigilance and care, probably some *designing hypocrite* will find a way into your community, whose hypocrisy may afterwards be detected; or perhaps some one who shall have been of considerable standing there, may walk contrary to his profession, and dishonour God: in both these cases it will be necessary to admonish and reprove, and if admonition fail to answer the desired end, and is disregarded, it will then be necessary to proceed to severer measures, and to remember that there is a way *out of the church* as well as *into it*; 'Son of man,' saith the Lord, 'shew them the *goings out* thereof:' an unworthy and dishonourable member of a church of Christ is like a distempered limb, which being mortified, endangers the whole body to which it is united, and therefore *must* be cut off, lest the whole body should be infected thereby, and perish.—This work, as we have said, however painful, must be attended to in certain cases, otherwise, we shall be partakers of other mens sins, retain that reproach which in measure might be wiped away, and offend God, by conniving at iniquity; but then, like skilful surgeons, we should never use the knife 'till all other means fail.—Permit me here to add, if you should be ever call'd to exercise this trying part of church-discipline, take care that your motives be right; let them be, not selfwill and revenge, but the glory of God, the purification of the church, and the good of the offender; for it would be very unbecoming and imprudent in us to exercise our evil passions in a part of dis-

cipline which we ourselves may have to undergo, and if not kept by an almighty power most certainly shall deserve.

You have this day separated yourselves from the world, and by professing to be a church of Jesus Christ, declare that you are not of the world; from this day will the eyes of the world be upon you, the wicked will watch for your halting, they will observe narrowly your steps, and if they find any thing in your conduct that is criminal, they will not fail to report it, and to represent it too, in a light not the most favorable to your interest; they will triumph in your miscarriages, crying, 'Ah, so would we have it'—These are your professors—we do not see that they are better than other folks—Ah, they're all alike.'—How careful then, my dear friends, ought you to be that you give them no just cause for censure and reproach, no reason to speak evil of the professors of religion on your account, no room to judge unfavorably of the cause you profess, by the irregularity of your conduct. Methinks the very thought of bringing a reproach upon the cause you are this day embarked in, is almost ready to break your hearts, and you say, 'Lord, let me rather *die*, than sin against thee, and dishonour thy cause, and wound the hearts of thy dear children.'—May the Lord grant that *that* softness of heart, and tenderness of conscience may remain, to excite in you watchfulness throughout all your pilgrimage.—Endeavour so to conduct yourselves in all your dealings and connections that the men of the world may not have to say that

your religion will not make you honest tradesmen, nor good neighbours, but that notwithstanding all your pretensions to sanctity, you can over-reach in your bargains, falsify your promises, and quarrel with your neighbours; but as ye profess to be the disciples of Christ, let it be seen that your conduct is regulated by your Master's rule, who has said 'All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.' Admirable rule! calculated to solve a thousand difficulties; what way of judging, so accurate, what method of determining, so safe, as putting ourselves in the place of others, while we consider them in ours, before we pass sentence? To say all that respects your conduct towards the men of the world in one word, 'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father, who is in heaven.'

In the next place, my friends, permit me to add a word or two respecting your carriage towards the professors of religion of other denominations; be careful then that you give no one room to suspect that you consider all true religion confin'd to your own denomination; but if you profess to see farther than some others, and know more than they, do not despise them, nor pride yourselves in your own wisdom, but be humble and thankful; what have ye that ye have not received? were ye not once as ignorant as others? and, if there be now any difference, who hath made you to differ? is it not by the grace of God that you are what you are?

if then you have received all by grace, 'boast
'not, as tho' you had not received it:' there was
a time when you did not see many things which
you now see, so there may be a time when o-
thers shall encrease in knowledge as much as
you have done; and remember, he is not always
the greatest christian that *knows the most*, but
he that *obeys the best*: love all of every denomi-
nation in whom you can discern the lovely im-
age of your blessed Lord; that so doing, you
may obtain that honourable character, 'Lovers
'of good men.' Is it not unreasonable, as
well as uncharitable, that men who agree in *ten*
points, should live in the neglect of christian
love, because they disagree in *one*.—Let me
add by way of caution, let every man's consci-
ence bear him this testimony, that he is not
aiming to promote *his own cause*, more than *the*
cause of Jesus Christ. Brethren, you doubtless
think you are right, this yields you satisfaction,
but remember, it affords no proof to others that
you are so; let the excellency of your religion,
then, be evidenced by the amiableness of your
dispositions, and the uniformity of your lives;
and unite with all good men in endeavouring to
promote the *common cause* of our Lord and Sa-
viour, Jesus Christ.

You are this day become a church of Jesus
Christ; and having, I hope, first given your own-
selves unto the Lord, you have now, in the pre-
sence of the great God, and this congregation,
given yourselves one to another; suffer me then
to observe that new relations and connexions
create new duties and obligations; it is so in

natural relations; there are duties incumbent on the child, but when this child arrives at manhood, and become a husband, other duties devolve upon him; and immediately as he becomes a father, duties of another kind claim his attention: so it is in civil connexions; one kind of duties are incumbent on the servant, if he commence master, another sort, and if he arrive at office, and become a magistrate, a third class requires his observance: and so also it is in connexions and relations of a spiritual kind: you are this day entered into a near relation to each other, you are become brethren and sisters in one church: give me leave then to observe that many and great as your duties might appear before, they are this day greatly encreased.—My business now will be to point out these duties, and inculcate an observance of them.—And may the Lord help *me* to speak, and *you* to hear.—The first of these duties which I would inculcate, is,

1. LOVE. This is the very *essence* of true religion, and the necessary prerequisite to a christian conduct: without this it is impossible to do our duty, either towards God, or towards one another: if ye be destitute of love, your profession is vain, and you are neither likely to glorify God, nor edify each other. This may be call'd a foundation duty, it being that on which the right performance of every other duty depends.—The more we love, the more we are like to God, for 'God is love:' and what can we aim at so honourable and so excellent as to bear a likeness to the Deity; here then, as in all other

cases, duty and privilege are united.—To this duty, my dear friends, I hope you will not fail to pay a particular attention: for how sad must be the case of those professors, who, while they commune together, and commemorate the love of Christ, are destitute of love themselves! I ask, is there likely to be a blessing on their union and communion? I fear not.—Let your carriage to each other be such, that while others behold it, they may say, ‘See how these Christians love one another!’ Consider, my friends, how great are your obligations to the performance of this duty; Christ your dear Saviour has commanded it, saying, ‘A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another:’ and, do you hope that you are the objects of Christ’s love! let this love then constrain you to love one another.—Again, remember, Christ has set you the example, for he who has commanded you to love the saints, has loved them himself infinitely more than you do; and can you look upon a brother or sister, and believe that Christ has *so* loved them as to *die* for them, and feel no love for them yourselves! I hope it is otherwise with you. Again, consider, ye are brethren, children of the *same* Father, heirs of the *same* inheritance, purchased with the *same* blood, are travelling the *same* road, hoping for the *same* salvation, and expecting to dwell together forever; and let me add, are also members one of another; for, as saith the Apostle, Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular, this near relation then, ought to be considered as a stimulous to love; and does the Apostle say, ‘He that loveth his

'wife loveth himself;' so he that loveth the church, loveth that body of which he himself is a member.—In attending to this duty, you will bring glory to God, and be happy yourselves, yea, and make others happy also, for, 'behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!' If this love is due to all the saints, it cannot be less so to those of your own community; but as the relation is in some respects nearer, so the affection ought to be in some respects stronger.

2. SYMPATHY. If we love our fellow-members, we shall be ready to sympathize with them in all their troubles; the pilgrims path is often a rough and thorny way, for it is, 'thro' much tribulation that we must enter the kingdom,' and 'many are the afflictions of the righteous,' frequently, both of body and mind: now in all these troubles and afflictions you ought to sympathize with them; perhaps any very considerable assistance it may not be in your power to afford them, but *hard* is that heart that cannot pay *one* short visit, that cannot afford *one* piteous look, to a poor afflicted brother;—*there* he lies, on a bed of languishing, scorched with a burning fever, racked with accute pains, or wasted with pining sickness; the cries of his, *all but fatherless*, children, pierce much his ears, but more his heart, while he feels his enfeebled hand unable to supply their wants; and the partner of his cares, has her heart rent in twain, by the strength of conjugal affection, and the power of maternal love.—Here is another of your brethren, whose piteous case, asks all the

tender feelings of your sympathetic hearts;—he has grieved the Holy Spirit, and lost the presence of his God, and with the departure of the Son of righteousness, and his all-gladening rays, did all his joys depart;—his evidences are beclouded, his hopes of heaven are fled; he almost concludes that he shall no more see one cheerful day; and little more remains, in his apprehension, ‘but a fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation,’ to devour him.—Ah! my brethren, can you pass these solitary cells, these melancholy cottages, without turning in, to bear, by sympathy, a part of the burdens of their disconsolate inhabitants, and drop some cheering word, to support their sinking minds, and heal their broken hearts?—How excellent was the disposition of the great Apostle, who could say, ‘Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?’ Admirable spirit! Blessed disciple of the compassionate Saviour, who left us this excellent example! Imitate the Apostle, brethren, ‘bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.’

To sympathy let me add,

3. LIBERALITY. Our love and sympathy can never be made to appear genuine, without liberality, at least, if we have it in our power to communicate: what proof of love does that man give, who *only says* to his poor destitute brother, ‘Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled;’ but opens not his hand to communicate to his brother’s necessity, the things which he has it in his power to bestow, and which he knows his brother wants: how deplorable had been our

case, brethren, if Christ had only pitied us, and not added communication to his compassion! Alas! we had been for ever miserable: follow the example of Christ then, brethren, and to your sympathy add liberality.—The primitive christians had weekly collections for their poor, they had compassion on the fatherless, and provided for the widow, ‘the blessing of him that was ready to perish, came upon them;’ and shall we steel our hearts, and stand all the day idle? Open your ears, my brethren, and with them your *hearts*, to the crying necessity of pinching poverty, and turn not your eyes from beholding the wants of the destitute.—*There is a poor brother, whose hungry bowels, when fed by the hand of thy liberality, would rejoice to bless thee; and can thy heart be so hard, unfeeling, and stupid, as to deny relief to his necessities, and prevent his grateful heart from blessing thee? There is a poor sister, whose heart heaves with sorrow for the loss of an affectionate and indulgent husband, by whose industrious hand she has been accustomed to have her own, and her family’s necessities supplied; but now, alas! one grave hath swallowed up the husband and the father, and together with him, all her hopes of earthly comfort; his lips, now cold, and silent, no more drop the wholesome words of instruction to the mother and her children, nor his hands provide their necessary food; but the fatherless children are left to feel the miseries of pinching necessity, while their sad sorrows encrease the swelling anguish of their widowed mother’s heart, which before was overborne with grief.—And can you imagine*

that these sad scenes require your sympathy *alone*? Do they not also demand your assistance? Is not God hereby giving you opportunity to prove the sincerity of your love? And to give evidence before God and men that your hearts are not destitute of christian charity?—Remember the words of the beloved Disciple, ‘Who-
‘ soever hath this worlds good, and seeth his
‘ brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels
‘ of compassion from him; how dwelleth the love
‘ of God in him?’ Let me add, with that affectionate Apostle, ‘My little children, let us not
‘ love in *word*, neither in *tongue*, but in *deed* and
‘ in *truth*.’—Well then, brethren, ‘To do good
and to communicate, forget not;’ and for your encouragement remember, ‘with such sacrifices
‘ God is well pleased.’—When your Lord comes the second time, and calls the whole world to Judgment, and says to you, ‘Come,
‘ ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom
‘ prepared for you from the foundation of the
‘ world: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me
‘ meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink:
‘ I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked,
‘ and ye clothed me, I was sick, and ye visited me:’ when you find, by happy experience, that what you do for Christ’s poor children, he takes it as done unto himself, and that the small gift of ‘a cup of cold water, shall *in no wise* lose’ its reward, you will not then think you have done too much for the poor of Christ’s flock.—The next duty which I would recommend, is,

4. IMPARTIALITY. See that ye be not partial, brethren, for if ye be respecters of per-

sons, all your liberality will not give satisfaction; for, if while one is remembered, another be forgotten, this will cause grief and uneasiness, and perhaps disgust. Take care that you give no fellow-member occasion to say, 'Ah! they have no respect for me; I'm look'd upon as an outcast here, and I fear I shall be found one hereafter:' lest he cry unto God, and it be found sin in you. Be careful, if you be call'd to judge in any matter, between two fellow-members, not to pervert justice thro' partiality, whatever difference there may be between the parties, as to worldly circumstances. Be careful also that you do not divide into parties, thro' partiality; for divisions will beget prejudices; and then farewell peace and happiness. If you give the preference to any, besides such as are in office, let it be to the aged; 'honour the hoary head that is found in the ways of righteousness;' and to the man that bears most his Saviour's image, for he is most worthy to be honoured. Take heed also that ye be not *partial to yourselves*; and so while you behold the *mote* that is in your brother's eye; you see not the *beam* that is in your own eye. Be impartial also in your attention to the divine commands, and while you attend to one, see to it that you do not neglect another. 'Do nothing by partiality,' brethren, for, 'the wisdom that cometh from above, is without partiality;' therefore, 'have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.' On the other hand be *very* careful that none of you *suspect* partiality, where it is not used, nor intended.

Another of the duties which are incumbent upon you, is,

5. PEACE. This is a duty of great consequence in the church of God; for no longer than peace is maintained, may you expect prosperity; when once a church of Christ, which ought to be a quiet and peaceable habitation, becomes a house of strife and contention, and the members of churches look upon one another as enemies, and not friends, as strangers, and not brethren, what can then be expected, but 'confusion, and every evil work?' Is it reasonable *then* to expect prosperity? Does not the blessed Spirit shun the seats of wrath and clamour? and woe to that church from which he departs! Will young converts, whose hearts are full of love to the sons of peace, be as ready to join the children of strife? And will the real lovers of peace be forward to unite in fellowship with the promoters of contention? Or will they not rather dread the thought of being connected with such a people? If then, you wish for happiness and prosperity, brethren, 'Endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace:' and consider also, ye profess to be the subjects of the Prince of peace, yea, the children of the God of peace, how unbecoming your character, then, and how contrary to your profession, do you act, when, instead of manifesting a peaceable disposition, you evidence the contrary. Remember the advice of Joseph to his brethren, 'See that ye fall not out by the way:' let not little things be the occasion of disputes and contentions among you;

remember, the peace of the church is too valuable to be disturb'd in order to gratify the humour and caprice of *any* individual, and every church-member ought to prefer the peace of the church to the gratification of his own temper: but I am aware that the angry man, who is heated by passion, and blinded by prejudice, will reply, 'But it is truth that I am contending for;'—I ask, What, *pure truth*, without *any mixture of self-will*? Look narrowly,—examine closely,—'tis *more than possible* that some *evil passion* may hide itself under the specious name of zeal for God: but, be it so, that truth is your object, so it is your brother's too; you would wish, I apprehend, your brother to conform *his faith* to *your standard*; but he possesses an *equal right* to require *the same* of you; which is in fact no right at all: you wish the liberty of judging for yourself; give him that liberty, he asks no more; and *that* you are bound to give, by the great Author of christian liberty, who hath said, 'All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.' Can it be reasonable to yield to *unreasonable* requirements? Ask no more then of your brother than is reasonable, no more than you are willing that he should require of you, and then probably you will not be denied. Remember, brethren, 'how great a matter a little fire kindleth; the beginning of strife is like the letting out of water; therefore leave of contention before it be meddled with.' It is very easy to break peace; but very hard to restore it: therefore, 'as much as in you lieth, if it be possible, live peaceably

‘with all men;’ and endeavour to cultivate the same among yourselves, ‘and the God of love and peace shall be with you.’—In order to a proper cultivation of peace, it will be necessary to exercise,

6. SELF-DENIAL. He who will not use self-denial, can never make a peaceable member of society, for men in a state of imperfect knowledge, can never all see alike, and it would be unreasonable to expect it; but proud nature, far from compliant, does not like to yield: without the exercise of self-denial, then, there must be an end of peace; for where men *see* differently, in many cases they will *act* differently; and if it be in a matter of church-discipline, there will most likely be a majority on one side, and consequently a minority on the other, whose duty, no doubt, it is to submit to the greater number; but submission calls for self-denial, and which in such a case ought to be exercised, and submission rendered, without murmuring.—Self-denial is *essential* to christianity, it is the christian’s duty, when he is considered personally; but when he becomes a member of a christian society, duty binds him to exercise it differently.—Probably there may be some part of the conduct of some of you, which in your apprehension, and in itself, may be innocent, but it may not be so in the view of some of your brethren, their minds, being weak, may be hurt by it; now in such a case we ought to use self-denial, or else we ‘walk not charitably,’ for, as saith St. Paul, ‘We that are strong ought to bear the infirmi-

'ties of the weak, and not to please ourselves;' and according to this rule the Apostle himself determined to act, for, altho' 'he knew and 'was persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there 'was nothing unclean of itself,' yet, so great was his charity and self-denial, that 'if meat made 'his brother to offend, he would eat no flesh 'while the world should stand, lest he made 'his brother to offend.' Excellent example! Let us copy it, my brethren; and let us 'look, 'not every man on his own things, but every 'man also on the things of others;' and let us not be self-willed, but 'submit ourselves one to another, in the fear of God.'

In order to the more easy exercise of self-denial, let me recommend,

7. HUMILITY. On humility depends the exercise of self-denial, for the proud man thinks it too great a stoop for him, to deny himself for the sake of others; while the man who is little in his own eyes, can easily submit to others, and deny himself for their advantage; he does not think himself of so much consequence that every thing must give way to him; he is diffident, in many cases, of his own judgment, and therefore can more easily bear contradiction than the proud and confident.—Humility is an excellent grace, it makes the disciple like his Lord and Master, who was 'meek and lowly;' and whose lovely image it is our greatest honor to resemble. Is it possible that we should be his disciples without humility? Would it not imply a contradiction, to say, Such an one is a *proud*

disciple of the *humble* Saviour? Pride is abhorrent to God, and disgraceful to man; but humility is the christian's ornament; the Apostle Peter therefore saith, 'Ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder; yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.'—How disgraceful is it for a man who bears the honourable character of a member of a church of Christ (and who therefore is expected to exercise all humility) to swell with pride, shew supercilious airs, grow up into a Diotrephes, and lord it over God's heritage, wanting in every thing to bear the sway; and so convert a *society of free christians*, into a *company of slaves*, over which he himself becomes a *petty tyrant*. Ought not such a man to tremble at the proverb, 'Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.'—Assume not the appearance of masters in the church of God, but like him who washed the disciples feet, let each one take 'upon him the form of a servant;' and 'let nothing be done thro' strife, or vain-glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other *better* than themselves.'

The next duty which I would inculcate, is,

8. PRAYER. Prayer is, by some divines, called the breath of the christian; and, indeed, the christian lives no longer than he prays; when once he begins to neglect this duty, he begins to die, and no longer lives, as a christian. Prayer is the duty of every christian; but members of churches have particular connexions, and are

therefore under peculiar obligations to this duty; it is not only their duty to remember Zion in *general*, but to pray for the church to which they belong in *particular*; they ought to pray that the word preached among them may be blessed to their brethren, as well as to themselves, that their brethren may grow in grace, as well as they, and that God would bless the word for the conversion of sinners, and encrease the church, by adding to it daily, such as shall be saved. It is their duty also to pay a special attention to particular cases; the churches of Christ are seldom long without their trials; these trials should be brought by every member of the church to a throne of grace, and there, direction, assistance, and deliverance should be sought. Moreover, enquiry should be made into the particular cases of your fellow-members, and each one should be borne upon your hearts before God; and if you find any of your brethren or sisters under affliction, or any heavy trials or temptations, let such by no means be forgotten in your prayers: and for your encouragement, remember, he that hath said, 'Pray one for another;' hath also said, 'The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much:' and can you see a poor fellow-member labouring under the weight of a heavy affliction, or hear him groaning under the power of some sore temptation, and not lend him the kind assistance of your prayers! Pray hard *for* one another, brethren; and pray also *with* one another; and no doubt ye shall be answered; Christ hath said, 'If two of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which

‘ is in heaven.’ Believe the promise, nor more distrust his word.—With prayer let me connect, as once the Master did,

9. WATCHFULNESS. It is not sufficient that you pray, but you must also *watch*: both these united will not be found more than sufficient to guard you against the snares of the world, the assaults of the devil, and the lusts of the flesh: these are powerful enemies, and to withstand them will require all your vigilance. Remember, also, others are watching you, the wicked are watching for your halting, this should make you the more watchful of yourselves. ‘The devil,’ also, ‘your grand adversary, as a ‘roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he ‘may devour; therefore, be sober, be vigilant.’ The eyes of other professors are also upon you: and *above all* remember, the eye of a holy God is always upon you, beholding *all* your conduct: let these considerations excite you to watchfulness. And be careful to watch the *first motions of sin* in your hearts, that you may quench the spark of sin, before it be kindled into a flame. ‘Watch and pray,’ then, ‘that ye enter not in- ‘to temptation.’ Let me add, it is your duty also to watch over one another; not with a view to pick up something in order to reproach each other, but let it be in love, and with a view to prevent any disgrace that might be brought upon the cause of Christ, thro’ the misconduct of a fellow member. I’ll conclude this article with the words of Christ; ‘What I say unto one, ‘I say unto *all*; WATCH.’

To watchfulness let me add,

10. FORBEARANCE. In exercising the duty of watchfulness over one another, probably you may discern something amiss in the conduct of a christian brother; but which, however, is not a *capital* offence; in such a case, you are not to be rash and hasty, but to use forbearance; you are not to make a man an offender for a word, but call to mind your *own* infirmities, and remember how much you need forbearance, both from God and man: is thy brother in an error; perhaps he does not see it; if he did, probably he would be as desirous to forsake it, as thou art that he should; thou art not then, severely to rebuke him, but in meekness to instruct him; for that thou thyself hast oft-times been in errors, thine own heart doubtless can testify. Call to remembrance the words of the Apostle, brethren; 'Put on therefore (as the elect of God, holy and beloved) bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another in love.' Cover, with the mantle of love, the common infirmities of your brethren: but if their offence be more capital, then I must recommend to you another duty; which is,

11. ADMONITION. There are some offences of too heinous a nature to be overlook'd, and passed by in silence; and, indeed, it would be wrong they should, for that would be to suffer sin upon our brother, which the word of God forbids: your duty, in these cases, will be to admonish and reprove; but be care-

ful to proceed according to the scripture rule, for admonition is a very difficult duty, and properly, to give reproof, requires great wisdom and caution; endeavour then to study the word of God respecting this matter: and give me leave to recommend to your attentions the following rule, laid down by our Lord; 'If thy brother
' shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his
' fault between thee and him alone: if he shall
' hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother: but
' if he will not hear thee, then take one or two
' more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established: and if
' he neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church;
' but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be
' unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.'

Here observe, you are not to make publick your brothers offence, unless necessity require it, but to endeavour to show him wherein he has done amiss; and if he confess his fault, forgive him, and let the injury die; let no man know it, without necessity; and be particularly careful not to make any thing church business until you be obliged to do it; there has been a world of mischief made by bringing every trifling thing before the church: the rule we have just adverted to, gives no countenance to such a practice, but quite the contrary.—The spirit in which admonitions are to be given and received, also requires your attention, for on this their success very much depends; if in your admonitions you suffer your angry passions to be predominant, they will, most likely, render all you say, of no effect; for you will generally find that the same spirit which you manifest, will be begotten

in your friend; so that admonitions given in an angry spirit, will be received in anger, and such as are given in love, will be much the most likely to be received in love: besides, how very unbecoming and imprudent is it, for a man that is subject to infirmities, and liable to admonitions himself, to go to a fallen brother in the spirit of anger, as tho' he his self had never been guilty of a single crime, nor ever should. How contrary is this to the apostolic rule, 'Brethren,' saith the Apostle, 'if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one, in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself lest thou also be tempted.' Is thy brother fallen; well; 'Thou standest by faith; be not high-minded, but fear.' Again, admonitions ought to be received in love, they are intended for the benefit of the person who receives them, and should be considered as acts of friendship and brotherly kindness: if a brother converts me from the error of my way; instrumentally, he saves my 'soul from death, and hides a multitude of sins:' then let us say with David, 'Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head: for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities.' To say all in a word, Let all your admonitions be given in love; and be sure to let your brother see that your design is, not to *reproach* him, but to *restore* him; and while one brother becomes a wise and affectionate reprove, let the other lend an obedient ear.

The next duty of which I would remind you, is,

12. FORGIVENESS. It is impossible but that offences will come; and therefore when they do come, we should be prepared to receive them; not by indulging and cherishing a spirit of resentment, but by a steady determination not to be 'overcome with evil, but to overcome evil with good.' Let us not be surprized at offences; for what reason can we have to expect that every body should humour our inclination, and give way to us? Are we persons of *so* much consequence? It is then probably *in our own eyes*, and not in the eyes of others: but, would any of you wish to appear great; then let him exercise forgiveness; and he will not only *appear* great, but *be* so; for 'it is a man's glory to pass over a transgression: and he that ruleth his spirit, is better than he that taketh a city.' Consider, my friends, how reasonable is this duty; but what folly and madness is displayed in a contrary conduct. Here is a brother has offended you; probably without intention; but your over-heated spirit imputes it to design; he is willing to make concessions, and seeks a reconciliation; but, Ah! you cannot be reconciled;—you cannot forgive:—your prejudiced mind considers his repentance as feigned, his humiliation as hypocritical; and, 'till your stony, unrelenting heart be softened, in vain does he shew the true tokens of sincerity. But let me ask thee, inconsiderate mortal! How dost thou approach a throne of grace? How dost thou draw nigh to God, the Searcher of all hearts? Canst thou hide from him the hardness of thine heart; or, canst thou ask forgiveness, and yet not forgive! But should thy heart presume to

ask the important blessing, canst thou think it will be granted? Or hast thou forgotten the positive declaration of the Lip of truth? Remember, he hath said, 'If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.' One would think, that he who reads these words seriously, would not dare to close his eyes in sleep, 'till he had from his heart, freely, and fully, forgiven all who had offended him; lest awaking no more in this world, he should appear before God unforgiven, with *all* his sins about him. How excellent then is the advice of Paul, 'Let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil.' I remember having heard of two good men who on some occasion had a quarrel; and remembering this exhortation of the Apostle, just before sun-set, one of them went to the other, and knocking at the door, his offended friend came and opened it, and seeing who it was, started back with resentment and surprize, the other at the same time cried out, The sun is *almost* down:—this unexpected salutation softened the heart of his friend into affection, and he return'd for answer, Come in brother, come in. What an example, brethren! Let us do ourselves the honour to follow it. It is generally allow'd, I presume, that our Lord's prayer was intended as a directory for us; if so, then we ought *always* to cultivate a spirit agreeable thereto, and *never* cherish a disposition that would prevent our using it; but how is the man that cannot forgive his brother, to use *this* petition, 'Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us'? Such a man

forgives not at all, and therefore to pray to be forgiven as he forgives, is to pray that he may not be forgiven at all; and if he be not forgiven, his sins will sink him down to everlasting torments:—think, then, of the advice of Christ, and forgive, before ye ask forgiveness. But methinks some of you are saying, ‘We have forgiven, once, and again; and still offences are repeated; how often would you have us forgive?’—Peter said, ‘Till seven times;’ but Peter’s Lord, *Until seventy times seven.*—Ah! my brethren, what will become of us, if God forgive us but seven offences! surely *hell* must be our portion. Well, then, ‘if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye:’ that is, freely, fully, and forever, never to upbraid you with it more.—This leads me to another duty, which is,

13. UNION. Christians, especially members of the same church, ought to unite together. Brethren, let it not be said, that your ‘contentions are like the bars of a castle;’ that you cannot yield; but let it be seen, that you are like ‘willows by the water-courses,’ whose pliant branches gently bow, and mutually yield to embrace each other. Unite together, and meet, as opportunity shall offer; not only for publick worship, but also for social duties, for remember, the various services which ye owe each other, can never be perform’d, unless you meet and unite together: if you keep at a distance, how are you to unite in prayer, edify, and watch over one another? Social meetings are very profitable; and where they are neglected, we gene-

rally find a want of zeal for God ; such churches seldom flourish, but on the contrary we generally see the members of such a society grow cold and lifeless : christians, like burning coals, soon lose their warmth and fervour, when parted from each other ; but bring them near together, and each conspires to give and receive a mutual glow, so that the whole is all on fervent flame. Meet together, my friends, for prayer and conversation ; how often has it been seen, that a company of christians, who met together dull and stupid, carnal and lukewarm, destitute of the spirit of devotion, and having neither heart nor tongue for God, have had their cold affections warm'd, their hard hearts made soft, their languid hopes reviv'd, their beclouded evidences brighten'd, and their mouths fill'd with heavenly praise ; and have parted full of joy. While one relates the pleasing story of his conversion, with melting heart, and flowing eyes, another, eager to receive the whole, thrusts forward his head big with expectation, while he feels his sympathetic soul kindle into love ; a third communicates his spiritual experiences, and declares the gracious dealings of God with his soul ; and while his lips, seasoned with grace, rehearse the wondrous tale, his brethren, reminded of former seasons, find their dying hopes revive, the clouds of darkness flee away, and they cleave, in love, to God and one another. 'Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity ! Forsake not, then, the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is.'

Another duty incumbent on the professors of religion, is,

14. SEPERATION. 'Be ye seperate,' is a divine command; and as it becomes the members of churches to unite together, so it becomes them also to be seperate from the world, as much as in them lies; they are 'a garden inclosed,' taken out of the wilderness of this world, and profess not to be of the world, but to be a distinct people, seperated by the grace of God; let them then, like their divine Master, be 'seperate from sinners;' entirely, they cannot; but let them not make carnal men their bosom friends, nor unnecessarily keep company with the wicked; lest, to their sorrow, they find that, 'their words eat as doth a canker,' and impair the vitals of religion. It was said of Ephraim, 'He hath mixed himself among the people, Ephraim is a cake not turned: strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not: yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth it not.' Ephraim had lost his strength, by keeping company with those that knew not God, and the tokens of declension came imperceptibly upon him, 'till he was 'like a silly dove without heart;' that is he was in some measure harmless, but had lost all his zeal, and had no heart for God. 'Be not deceived,' my friends; 'Evil communications corrupt good manners.' 'Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye seperate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing;'—'But if I do this, I must forsake my relations, my friends, my father; I must give up all my worldly prospects.' say

you;—Well, be it so, the Lord saith, ‘I will receive you; and will be a *Father* unto you, and ye shall be *my* sons and daughters.’ What a promise this! you shall be *infinitely* gainers by your loss! Trust in the Lord; take him at his word; his promise *never* fails.

The next duty that I would inculcate is a very important one, and that is,

15. HOLINESS. In this, endeavour to be patterns to all around you; that others, beholding ‘your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven.’ Your Lord hath said, ‘Be ye holy, for I am holy:’ and more will be expected from you, than from many others, because ye profess more. As ye are come out from the men of the world, see that your conduct be not like theirs; but as you profess to be the disciples of Christ, imitate your great Master. Take heed to your steps; and be careful to fill up every character you bear, and every relation and connexion in which you stand, with honour, and with a good conscience. If you have parents—Honour them. If you have masters—Obey them. Have any of you unbelieving companions? Endeavour to win them by your good conversation. Are you masters? Threaten not your servants, but instruct them. Have you children? Endeavour to ‘bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.’ Be careful to set a good example in your families; and let your houses be houses of prayer, lest the curse of God fall upon you. Give your servants no room to think they have a prayer-

less master: nor your children to lament the want of a praying parent; lest another day they should arise and curse you: but let every part of your conduct be such as shall teach them some good lesson of instruction. Remember, you profess to be born from above, to be the sons and daughters of the LORD ALMIGHTY! Degrade not, then, your heavenly birth; stab not the cause which you profess; 'but watch, and be sober; watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation,' and so fall from your profession. Brethren, 'ye are the Temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them: remember then, that holiness becomes his house for ever.'

To all the forementioned duties, I would add,

16, and lastly. DILIGENCE. Diligence is becoming in every lawful calling, but most of all, in our high and heavenly calling; because that is of the greatest consequence; hence the Apostle says, Not slothful in business; *fervent* in spirit; serving the Lord. An idle christian, is a strange sound; and, an *indolent servant*, almost a contradiction in terms: if we would therefore prove that we really are servants, we must lay aside our indolence, and 'give diligence to make our calling and election sure' And let us remember that Christ hath said, 'Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.' The affairs of your souls, brethren, are of the

greatest importance; and therefore demand your *utmost application*; for, 'if a man should lose his
' own soul, what would he give in exchange for
' his soul?' If your souls are lost, *all* is lost. Surely, then, he that neglects the concerns of his soul, is a stranger to the worth of it. I would wish you also to remember, brethren, that to *every particular duty which has been inculcated*, you are to add *diligence*, and to exercise it in them *all*; that so you may escape the odious name of, *Slothful Servants*; and the awful portion of such as hide their talent in a napkin. Be diligent, then, in every duty; and for your encouragement, remember, God hath said, 'They that wait upon
' the Lord shall renew their strength: they shall
' mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run
' and not be weary, and they shall walk and not
' faint.' Let your grand aim be, *so* to act, as you may at the last day obtain the approbation of the great Judge of all the earth: and, 'So run
' that ye may obtain.—As many as walk ac-
' cording to *these rules*, peace be on them, and
' mercy, and upon the Israel of God.'

My dear Brother! * Permit me to add, it will be expected that *you*, in a particular manner, should be diligent in all these duties: as you are appointed to an office in the church of God, the eyes of your fellow-members will be upon you, and it is hoped you will set them an example of holiness and diligence. Don't con-

* The following address, was directed to one of the brethren, who was appointed to the office of a deacon,

fine your views of the office to which you are appointed, to secular and pecuniary matters; for if these be the only things which you are to attend to, why are such particular qualifications required in a deacon? Almost any honest man might have filled up the office, and they needed not to have chosen men 'full of faith, and of ' the Holy Ghost.' Visit the sick, and pray with them; and give evidence to all around you, that yours, is that 'pure religion, and undefiled,' which teaches, 'to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep yourself unspotted from the world.' In a word; Endeavor to be a *nursing-father* to this little people; and help forward such as you may see waiting at the doors of God's house: and may God grant that you may see prosperity, and that your own soul may prosper.

'And now, brethren, I commend you to ' God, and to the word of his grace, which is ' able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.' And may the blessing of GOD ALMIGHTY, the FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, rest upon you; may you be increased into a *multitude*; and when your lips shall lay silent in the grave, and this generation pass away, may your *children*, and your *children's children*, be a seed to serve the Lord, throughout all generations, 'till Christ shall come.—To Him be glory, both now, and for ever. *Amen*, and *Amen*.

THE END.

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